During the visit of External Affairs Minister to Pakistan from February 15-17, 2005, the issue of early release and repatriation of all the Indian fishermen along with their boats was again taken up. Pakistan Foreign Minister also mentioned at the press conference held on 16.02.05, that the issue of detained fishermen and civilian prisoners was a humanitarian issue and that it was agreed to work out a mechanism for their early release following a summary procedure.

Amendment in IT Act

*57. SHRIMATI JAYA BACHCHAN: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to amend the Information Technology Act; and

(b) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Government of India has set up an Expert Committee to examine and recommend suitable amendments to the Information Technology Act, 2000 as per the terms of reference given in the enclosed Statement.

Statement

Terms of reference of the expert committee on Information Technology Act

1. To re-examine the IT Act, 2000 so as to ensure that the Act remains enabler to development of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and has adequate measures for promoting growth of electronic commerce and electronic governance in the country and also for regulating cyber crimes and cyber forensics as well as addresses all aspects of the cyber security etc. in a manner that there is no scope for different interpretations and follows the international guidelines for uniformity to gain from the process of globalisation.

2. To consider the recommendations made by the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on Cyber Law & Cyber Forensics & finalize the amendments to the IT Act, 2000.

3. To consider and recommend suitable legislation for data protection (privacy) in the IT Act, 2000.

4. To consider the feasibility of making the IT Act, 2000 technology neutral and recommended necessary amendments to the IT Act, 2000.

5. To consider the additional feedback and suggestions received by the Government and recommend suitable amendments to the IT Act 2000.

6. To consider the issues of regulation of operations of cyber cafes and blocking of websites within the IT Act.

7. To consider the matter of India signing the European Cyber Crimes Treaty and make suitable recommendations.

8. The Expert Committee shall submit its report within a period of six weeks.

Reduction in Access Deficit Charges

*58. SHRIMATI SARLA MAHESHWARI: Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have made an aassessment of loss to the BSNL due to the TRAI's decision to reduce Access Deficit Charges (ADC);

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether it is a fact that this loss is going to adversely affect the BSNL's responsibility in providing telephone facilities in rural areas; and

(d) the steps taken by Government to improve the facilities in the rural/ backward areas?

THE MINISTER OF COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (SHRI DAYANIDHI MARAN): (a) to (d) On 6th January, 2005, the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) announced a